The Australian National University

Institute of the Arts

Canberra School of Art

MASTER OF ARTS (VISUAL ARTS)

1995

Steven Mark Holland

WOLVES OF THE SEA:
A T.V. REPRESENTATION OF KILLER WHALES

Sub-thesis

30%

PRESENTED IN PART FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

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Abstract

This sub-thesis is concerned with the representation of nature. It examines the way in which other life forces, in particular killer whales, are represented by the television programme *Wolves of the Sea*. As a system of representation television has the potential to construct meanings. This sub-thesis attempts to identify the differing, and often conflicting meanings that are constructed about killer whales in *Wolves of the Sea*.

Structually, the chapters of this paper emulate the narrative format of *Wolves of the Sea*. They are written as a literal translation of the audio-visual experience of the television programme. "Why Wolves?" is a separate chapter which explores the metaphoric relations implied in the title and their implications for killer whales. Central to this analysis is that, any meanings produced by Natural History television documentaries such as *Wolves of the Sea*, reflect the dominant ideologies of their production and consumption.

Some of the concepts addressed in this research are common to a Studio Practice component, which comprises an additional 70% of the candidate requirements of this Master of Arts (Visual Arts) course. A series of works, produced at the Canberra School of Art Sculpture Workshop, focuses on domestic relationships that humans have with members of, what we loosely understand to be; the natural world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the creative guidance and support offered, during this research project, by both of my study Supervisors, and my post-graduate colleagues.

Thank You: GORDON BULL, theory supervisor.
DAVID WATT, sculpture supervisor.
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Special Presentation *Wolves of the Sea*

Wolves of the Sea is a television documentary about killer-whales. The wildlife film-makers David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook from The Natural History Film Unit in Melbourne, in association with the National Geographic Society and Turner Broadcasting, produced the film. It was broadcast nationally on the A.B.C. in April 1993, and August 1994. Six months after its release, 72,000 copies of the video had been sold through A.B.C. merchandising outlets throughout Australia. *Wolves of the Sea,* the book,[1] based on the documentary has been subsequently published.

Introduction

John Fiske's book *Television Culture*,[2] is a general source for this investigation. The application of his definitions of the *codes of television* has allowed this research to identify how audiences of the television programme, *Wolves of the Sea* encounter killer whales as representations in several distinct discourses.[3] The first of these is through the technical and ideological decisions of the film-makers. David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook. As accomplished wild-life photographers and sound recordists, they construct an audio-visual representation of killer whales. Their post-production of *Wolves of the Sea* encodes this killer whale footage according to the *conventions of television,* and as *an appropriate cultural text for its audiences.*[4] It achieves this by drawing heavily on the discourse of narrative. Killer-whales are presented to the audiences of

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[1] Richard Morecroft and Alison Mackay, Wolves of the Sea, co-published by ABC Magazines and Gore & Osment Publications Pty Limited, 1994.

[2] John Fiske, Television Culture, Methuen & Co., London. 1987.

[3] Fiske defines discourse at its simplest level as *the organization of language above the level of a sentence: it is thus an extensive use of language. By extension it can cover nonverbal languages so that one can talk of the discourse of the camera or the lighting. p.14.*

[4] John Fiske, 1987, p.5.

Wolves of the Sea as characters in a story.[5] In a lecture called *Anatomy of a Natural History Film*; *Wolves Of The Sea,* delivered at the 1993 Documentary Film Conference in Sydney, David Parer describes "the importance of story" as a structural device employed by the film-makers in planning and editing *Wolves of the Sea.*

The second discourse is David Attenborough's narration. It is also discursive. Written and articulated in his distinctive voice, which is synonymous with wild-life television programmes, the narration is a discourse that creates meaning for the perceived killer whale behaviour. The ideological origins of this meaning are located in an established Natural Historical understanding of the world and of living things where the existence of other species is explained in terms of natural selection and diversity.

While it appears that these discourses converge in a unified and coherent description of killer whale behaviour, they do however, assume varying and often conflicting degrees of importance throughout *Wolves of the Sea.* In Jonn Fiske's account, discourses of television are the product of the television industry and of the society with which it maintains a mutually affirmative relationship, whereas *texts are the product of their readers.*[6] When audiences around Australia tuned into *Wolves of the Sea* for the first time in April 1993, they became the site through which the meaning and pleasure of killer whale behaviour was produced.

This paper addresses you in a way that is, at times, a literary

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[5]David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook, Anatomy of a Natural HistoryFilm:*Wolves Of The Sea*, lecture delivered at the Documentary Film conference in Sydney, 1993.
In an endeavour to achieve a universal appeal *Wolves Of The Sea,*" draws on all those story telling devices you use in soap opera, in dramas and in feature films. So we try and think of our subjects as players, as characters, we try and look at dramatic structure. First of all you must establish your characters then you've got to lead your audience through a story." (my transcription of David Parer from the lecture)

[6]John Fiske,1987, p.14.

translation of the audio-visual experience of *Wolves of the Sea*. It is a cinematic text describing the combined effects of editing and sound as they appear within a predetermined time frame. The purpose of this is to acknowledge the interrelatedness of the discourses through which killer whales are represented in this case study. Like the film, I have structured this sub-thesis as a story, a story which begins with "Once Upon A Time",[7] and ends with "And they all lived happily ever after".

It is written from an audience perspective. As recipients and *readers* of the programme's texts I refer to the audience as a collective "we". Although "we" refers to the position which the text prepares for a single audience, it is accepted that meaning, gained and shared from *Wolves of the Sea*, is an experience relative to its many audiences.

In pointing out the intertextual systems that underlie an anthropomorphic schema of the programme, I am aware of the current debate among some natural historians and wild-life film-makers that favour this position as a necessary interpretation of the natural world.[8] While an anthropomorphic blurring of the nature/culture binary opposition may be one way to safeguard the earth and its creatures from destructive human forces, it is however, a limited way of seeing. The existence of other life forms, that fall outside of the categories of the human condition, propounds a freedom which is denied to us when we understand them in absolute human terms.

The Natural History television documentary starts out as an objectified portrayal of wild-life cycles. Once, however, it is presented to

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[7] David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook, 1993. David Parer outlines the structure of *Wolves of the Sea as an* intention to engage the audience in "A Once Upon a Time, epic."

[8] Recent Natural Historical publications such as The Human Nature Of Birds by Theodore Xenophon Barber, 1993, and the BBC wild-life series *Life Sense* underline an acceptance and a projection of human values onto, a understanding of other species.

viewers as an integral part of the entire television phenomenon, it exists separated from those originating Natural Historical purposes. "Nature", as represented by the Natural History television programme remains subservient in an ideology that equates unrestricted spectatorship with entertainment, information and consumption.

Audiences have come to anticipate ever-increasingly spectacular and amazing images from the televisual world of living things.[9] These images are structured in a diachronic ordering of time and can be examined within a narrative format. The pre-title sequence of *Wolves of the Sea* is significant. A textual reading of the first one and a half minutes provides some clues to the way that killer-whales are understood as historically and culturally specific constructions within a larger narrative structure.

And so the story goes...we are conjured into stillness by the four magical words that beckon fantastic places in distant times. The opening sequence begins; **"Once Upon A Time..."**

We are staring at the blackened television screen. A killer whale vocalisation is amplified into our *domestic site of reception*[10]. The mystery of the sound is heightened by the absence of visual context. *Wolves of the Sea* opens with an underwater view. The first image is of kelp fronds swaying in shallow blue water. Our vision is propelled forward through the seaweed and we look into water. There are specks of sand and tiny particles of weed suspended in the water, light filters down gently from the top of the screen. Our minds are awash with a beautiful translucence. The fluidity of perceived weightlessness is immediate. The high pitched muffled resonances of killer whales establish this vision as alien and viscous.

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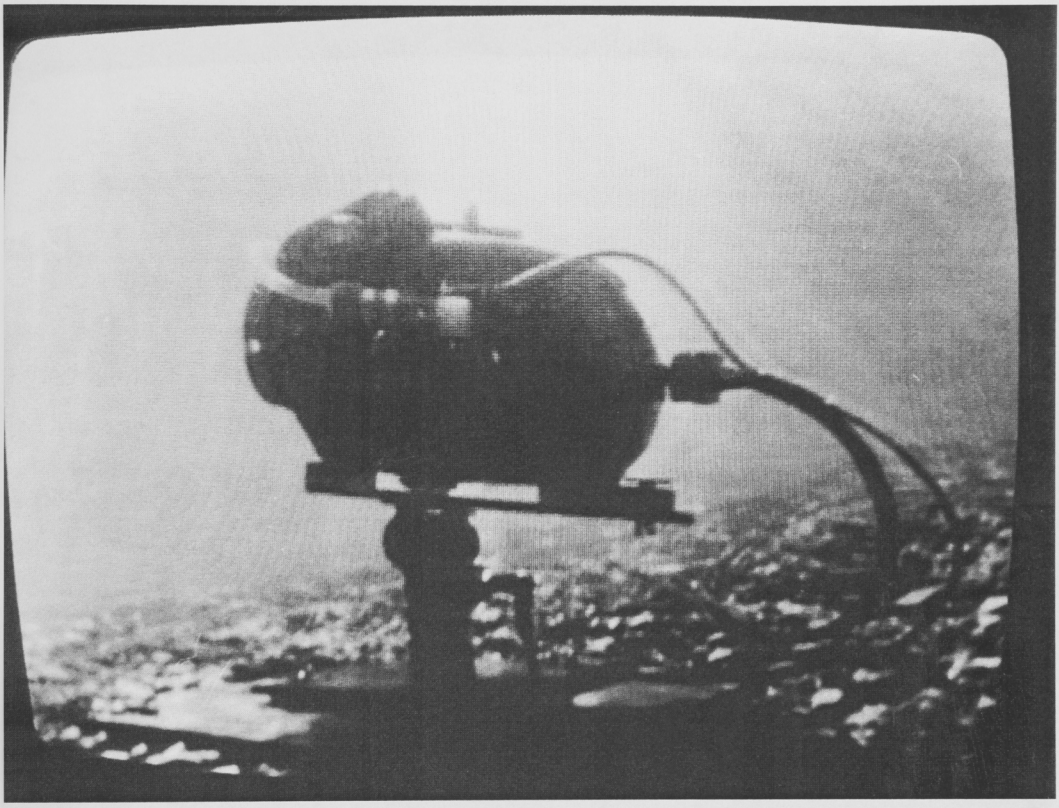
[9] Fred Harden, *You should have been here last week.* Cinema Papers, March 1988, p60.

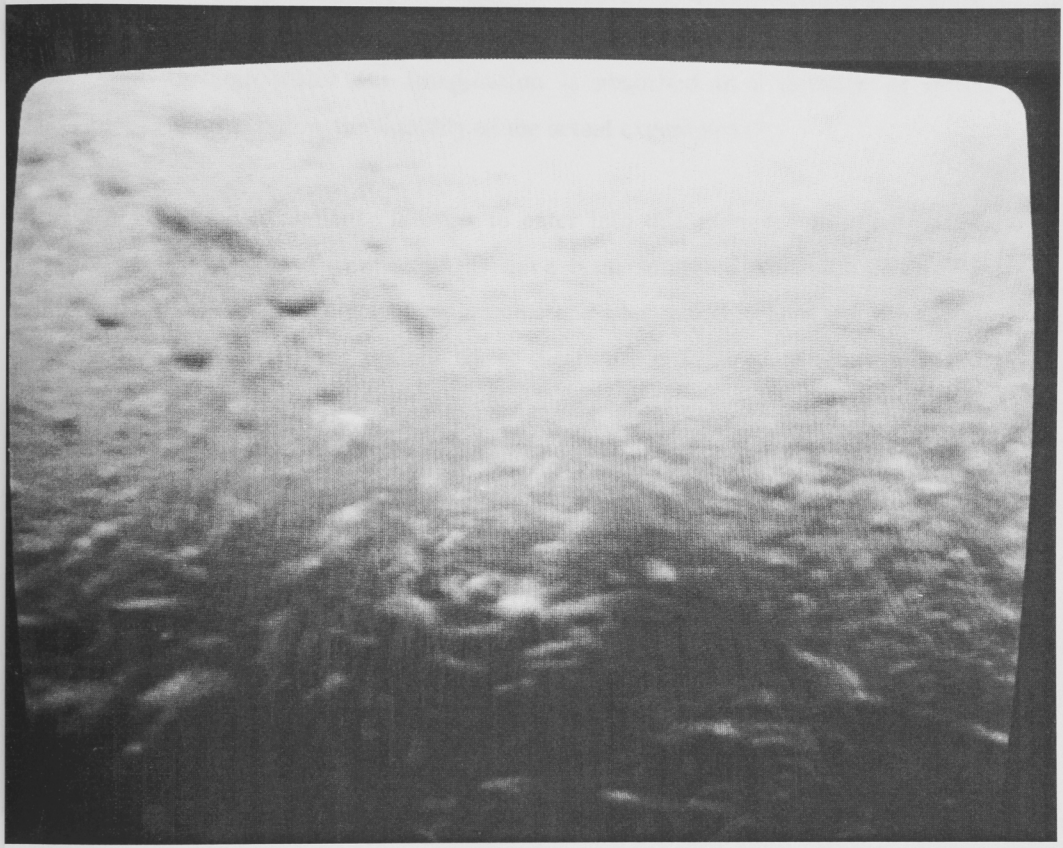
[10] John Fiske, 1987, p.62.

Illustration 1.



A underwater camera anchored to the sea floor. It was used in different shooting locations in the making of *Wolves of the Sea*.

Illustration 2.



An image of water that appears in the opening sequence of *Wolves of the Sea*. It is used to establish the underwater habitat of killer whales. These images explore the material quality of water. It operates in an unconscious way, evoking a dream-like realm within which, the audience encounters killer whales.

Projected into the viewer's consciousness is the image of water. It is a complex and deeply felt substance that is a powerful rumination in the human psyche. It is potently elemental. While establishing this world as a killer whale domain, the mythical and psychological functioning of water as an essential, life giving reality, is awoken in the audience. Pushing through water our imagination is absorbed in a passage of time, approximating the liquidity of the actual experience.[11]

The audience is eager to enter into this marine world, especially since viewer's expectations have been saturated by the trailers. We salivate for the actual programme and now that it is here we slip easily into a gratifying present where the future is foretold. Already seen are the images of killer whales exploding out of the water and snatching seal pups from the beach. Violence and fear are expected. Already seen are the interviews with the film-makers, where they discussed the advances in film-making technology, the special submarine cameras that now bring you footage of killer whales "never seen before". The spectacle unfolds as fragments of the prior promotions disperse into the televisual flow.

Killer whale sonar recordings merge with subtly trembling violins in the background sound track. The water scene is replaced by different one. It fades in gradually, almost imperceptibly. This aquatic scene is greener, visibility through the water is not as clear and the camera remains stationary. A killer whale swims into view from the bottom right hand corner of the television screen. It appears to look directly out into the space occupied by the audience before gliding slowly off to the top right hand corner of the frame.

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11 Gaston Bachelard, Water and Dreams .An Essay On the Imagination of Matter,The Pegasus Foundation, Dallas, 1942, In his psychoanalytical investigation *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard explores the powerful and profound associations between imagination and dreaming and the qualities of water. "A material element must provide its own substance, its particular rules and poetics" p. 3.

Illustration 3

A killer whale is filmed swimming past a stationary underwater camera. This image is constructed so that the killerwhale appears to consciously engage with a potential television audience.

The violins and killer whale sounds confabulate with a quick ascension of xylophone tones as the killer whale's tail flicks out of view. "*Killer whales, the most fearsome and artful hunters in the sea*", announces David Attenborough, as another killer whale swims directly towards us. Its head occupies the entire screen. We see one of the killer whale's eyes, and through the swirling transparency of televisual realism, imagine that glances are being exchanged. In a T.V.land gesture of implied intimacy, like a newsreader bidding us goodnight, the killer whale looks directly at us, into our lounge-rooms, kitchens or bedrooms or the many other public and private spaces that television inhabits.

"*They dominate the ocean just as man dominates the land*", continues David Attenborough. The screen is a deluge of turbulent water, as viewers we are positioned in the waves, on a shoreline, looking towards the land. Waves break around us, the water rises and falls, leaving droplets streaming down the screen. A man with his hands in his pockets is standing in the water looking at us. "*And when man meets killer whales on the frontier between land and sea, they seem to be as interested in us, as we are in them,*" explains the narrator as another wave waterlogs the screen and obliterates our vision of the man.

The next shot is filmed from the beach behind the man. A killer whale is in the water moving towards him. The man is slowly marching on the spot, the killer whale moves closer and exhales through its blow-hole. The man seems to be turning away. Our vision, subjected to the cinematic, shot reverse shot technique, is re-positioned in the water, we watch a killer whale seemingly look into the camera and swim away. The camera attempts to position the audience as both the killer whale and the man. This editing continuity works to subordinate space into a narrative

chain of cause and effect that is familiar to a soap opera audience. It is conventional television omniscience.

Now we are looking through an image of deep water. We subconsciously acknowledge the psychological dimensions of this liquidity, of the density of this substance. This perceived submersion that is a manifestation of imagination. The lights of the submarine camera illuminate the startling symmetry of another killer whale as it appears out of the blueness. It swims out of our frame of vision. "*Their high intelligence of which this curiosity is but one sign has led them to colonise every ocean on earth.*", says David Attenborough. Our eyes scan the screen in fascination of the killer whale movements, conscious of our own curiosity, hence, our own imperial intelligence, the power offered to us by the camera's controlling gaze.

A pod of killer whales can be seen to descend into the aqueous depths. In the background sound track sharp pin-points of violins being picked are layered onto underwater, killer whale sound recordings. "*Like wolves, they hunt in packs.*" explains David Attenborough, his intonation on the word "wolves" is forceful, it carries a howl. *Wolves of the Sea* is a title that supports a predator/prey metaphor. Rich indeed, are the stories that intertwine the wolf and the human deep past. In a historical scenario, killer whales are directly connected to the stories which have pejoratively portrayed the wolf. More of this later.

"*They have developed an extraordinary range of hunting techniques that enable them to catch whatever prey they find.*", says David. Our vision is now subjected to a shimmering school of herring. Killer whales move through and under the fish.

A cello can be heard. In a series of short, deeply reverberating notes that are reminiscent of the "Jaws" music, it gathers pace. "*Nothing is safe from the killer whales*", continues David, "*not the smallest herring or the largest seal*" A seal is swimming on the screen. The cello is joined by a trumpet and a piccolo. "*They are the Wolves of the Sea.*" accompanies an image of a seal pup entering the ocean. We know what is going to happen. The cello is frantic. We see a fin moving along the ocean surface and with the dramatic impact of the full classical orchestra a huge killer whale explodes out of the water to catch a seal pup from a beach. The title "Wolves of the Sea." is superimposed over the action, the climax is momentarily prolonged as the film is slowed down, the killer whale churns the sea white and the kettle drums fade. They are replaced by the sound of the killer whale thrashing and heaving in the sea. A gull, looking for tid-bits, flies from left to right across screen. The audience is stunned.

The film-maker's post-production editing techniques have created a powerful and terrifying conception of killer whales in this opening sequence. Anxiety and fear are utilised as theatrical agents to drive this narrative along. So powerful is the effect, most viewers fail to realise the story is constructed from separate images that are edited together. The seal pup that we see entering the waves for example, is not the same seal that is caught by the killer whale. We see a dorsal fin slicing through the water, then we see a killer whale catch a seal pup. What appears to be a unified and continuous reality is in fact a construction. They are images of different killer whales. The impact of this introduction is consistent with televisual *metadiscourse*[12] that is designed to captivate and sustain audience attention. It is a dramatic story that is produced as a text for understanding the behaviour of killer whales.

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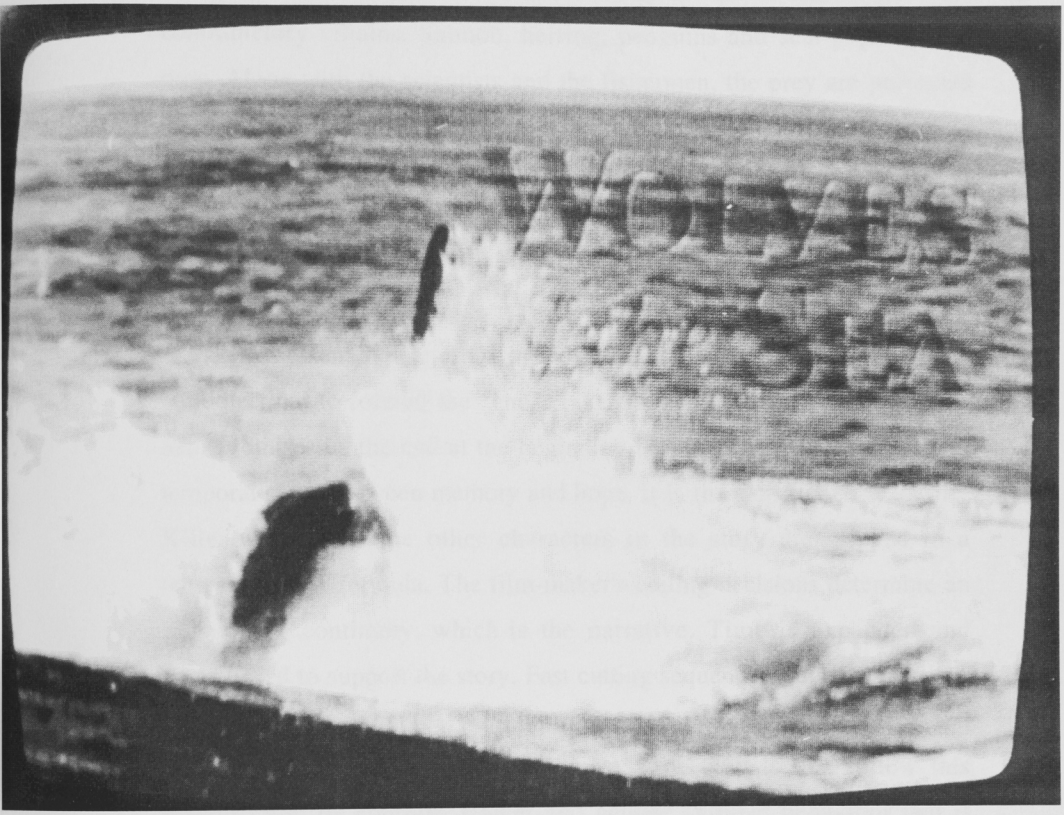
12 John Fiske, 1987, p 25. Fiske describes metadiscourse as taking heirachical precedence over and making sense of, the lower discourses of editing, camera, lighting, sound, etc.

Illustration 4.



The title *Wolves of the Sea* is superimposed over the dramatic action. The effect created is one of fear as the metonymic association between the word *Wolves* and the killer whale hunting behaviour is 'read' by the audience.

Structurally the introduction to *Wolves of the Sea* serves to familiarise the audience with its subject matter. It introduces the characters in a story. The killer whales are both heroes and the contradictory villains. Salmon, herring, penguins and seal-pups are the prey. Along with the scientists and the fishermen, the prey are presented as the main protagonists. The audience's emotional involvement is interdependent with the factual and rhetorical claims of David Attenborough, the narrator. It is a format that is typical of the Natural History television genre.

An essential role of the introduction in a narrative, is to situate the "middle" and to foretell the "end". Like all good stories, *Wolves of the Sea* promises us the end at the beginning and the middle unfolds in that temporal space between memory and hope. It is the satisfaction of desire. Killer whales and the other characters in the story are aligned in a temporal linear formula. The film-maker's editing decisions determine an illusionistic continuity, which is the narrative. Time is expanded and compressed to support the story. Fast cutting sequences, such as the killer whale bursting from the water, are ordered in time so that pace and dramatic impact are created. The images and sounds that follow this scenario are, by contrast, slower and gentler. Animal behaviour that is seen to unfold in a narrative time is designed to be accessible to a wide audience. It is the narrative's universal appeal.

"*All along the Pacific coast of North West America from Alaska, south to British Colombia the ocean is bordered by high mountain ranges. Glaciers flowing down the flanks of these great mountains, at the end of the last ice age have carved out huge valleys. Parts of these valleys were flooded and became long deep fiords*". This is the geographic data that our narrator imparts to us as we fly above a snow covered mountain peak. From our armchair vantage points we descend down into a fiord and glide over the river. This vision is extremely peaceful, the water is still, and a single bird-call ripples the silence. Its a welcome relief, a time to catch your breath, after the unrelenting, fast cutting, pace of the opening sequence.

Further up the river, we come across a whirl-pool. Our eyes, dislocated from our imagined bodies, hover above the spiralling water. As it spins around, the hypnotic movement sucks us into its vortex. Momentarily, the swirling river engulfs our imagination, it is a fantastic vision, and again we are summoned into the reservoir of dreams. We look around, there is the whirl-pool, a silvery underwater tornado. Here and there the kelp fronds reach out and lap the camera lens. Time is dizzily suspended in this compelling spectacle that siphons our vision from air to water without having to get wet.

The ideology that dominates this kind of technical vision of the natural world is what Donna Haraway calls the "god trick". In her essay *Situated Knowledge's: The Science Question In Feminism And The Privilege Of Partial Perspective*, Haraway cites the distorted potential that visualising technologies exhibit.

The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity - honed to

> *The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity - honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy- to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power. The instruments of visualisation in multinationalist, postmodernist culture have compounded these meanings of disembodiment.* [13]

Like many Natural History television shows, audiences are privileged to an unrestricted vision of the subjects of the natural world. The aggressive and requisite manner which a wildlife photographer probes the lives of nature is an example of what Donna Haraway calls an "eye fuck". In *Wolves of the Sea* for example, audience vision is relocated from ocean to land, and to outer-space and back again in a seemingly continuous way. Killer whale footage has been gathered from out of planes and off of boats, from remote controlled submarine cameras, from pan-tilt cameras and hydrophones mounted on the sea floor.

To explain the distribution of the killer whales and the similarity in their hunting techniques our unrelenting gaze is transported from the fiords of British Colombia to the west coast of Norway, to the Crozet Islands which lie South East of the Cape of Good Hope (*one of the most lonely and inhospitable places in the world*, says David Attenborough, which begs the question, *lonely and inhospitable* for whom?), and finally, to Madina Bay on the coast of Argentina. This panoptica has a hallucinatory affect. Disembodied, viewers never have to leave their lounge-rooms, for what is perceived as the world will come to them. Televised wilderness confirms the normality and safety of the viewer's domestic situation. Commercial television stations take advantage of this contrast as a strategic location for life insurance and petfood advertisements.[14]

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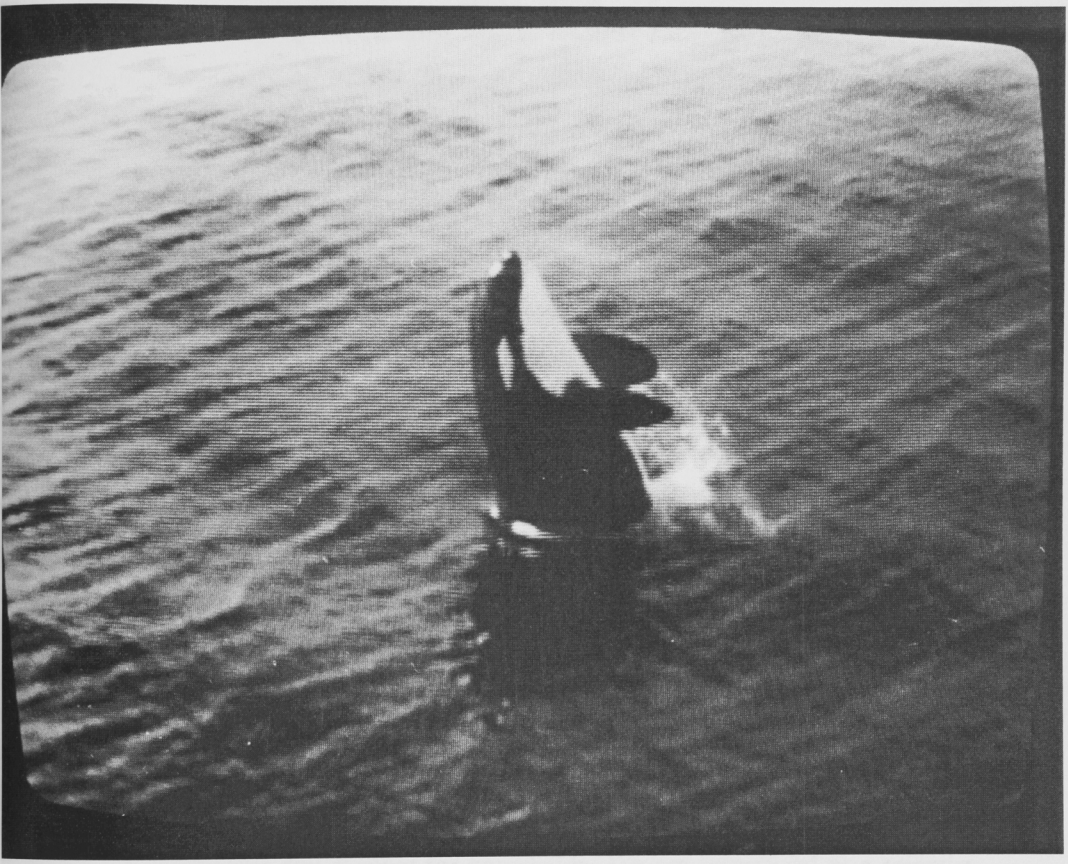
[13] Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges; The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*. Feminist Studies Inc. Vol 14. no.3, fall 1988, p.581

[14] Charles Siebert, *The Artiface Of The Natural;How TV 's nature shows make all the earth a stage.* Harpers Magazine, Feb 1993, p.45.

Illustration 5.



Taken from an aerial vantage point, this footage of killer whale, *spy hopping* behaviour, seen on *Wolves of the Sea,* illustrates the unrestricted vision of wild life subjects common to Natural History television.

Our quest for killer whale knowledge continues, and now we are swimming along with the salmon in Johnston Straight, one of the killer whale "hot-spots" for wild-life film-makers[15]. "*The salmon are making their way up the flooded valleys towards the particular river in which they were born. Sea-lions are already waiting there. But the salmon's greatest enemies are humans and the killer whales and both are on their way in pursuit of them*". Amongst the gulls and various predators, however, our narrator fails to mention the seasonal film crews, for this is big business. Although the budget for *Wolves of the Sea* remains confidential, it was jointly sponsored by pre-sales of the television programme. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the American National Geographic Society and TBS Production were the co-producers. Being a jointly sponsored project *Wolves of the Sea* accepts and promotes the ideologies of these philanthropic organisations. The 100 year old National Geographic Magazine is closely aligned with American political expansionism and discovery. The pages of the well known magazine making faraway places, people and Natural History immediate while also humanising them.[16]

David Attenborough soon delivers us a host of killer whale facts. Details about numbers in a pod and sonar navigation techniques, positivist orderings that account for knowledge. We are introduced to a scientist, John Ford, who has been studying killer whale sonar. He throws a hydrophone into the water and the underwater camera films the listening device sink to the end of its cord a few meters below his boat. Back on board with John, we see him adjust his surveillance equipment. "*He and his colleagues have named each pod with a letter of the alphabet and he*

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15 Elizabeth Parer-Cook, Anatomy of a Natural History Film: *Wolves Of The Sea*, lecture delivered at the Documentary Film conference in Sydney, 1993.

16 Joan Gero and Delores Root, Public presentations and private concerns.: *Archaeology in the pages of National Geographic*. Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, U.K. 1989, p.65.

can immediately recognise which group is calling", prompts our narrator. "'*H*' *pod is the only pod that makes that form of call*", says John as a high pitched sound is relayed from the fiord. "*There it is again, its a strong descending tone,* (he whistles a strong descending tone), *that is, classically* '*H*'". Killer whales can be individually identified by their distinctive markings and the shape of their fins, and each one, so we learn has been given a number.

Abruptly we are awakened from our dream. The mysterious background musical instruments which have been cleverly mimicking the tone and pitch of the killer whale calls has been replaced by objective scientific differentiation. The romantic and transcendentalist killer whale imagining, divestation of human ego, is ruptured by this imposition of signs. Two huge fins emerge along side John's research boat, they exhale loudly through their blow-holes. "*Oh its 'A6' and it looks like 'A38'!*" exclaims John with disconcerting discursiveness.

Maybe we have just experienced one of what the film-maker calls "a light point" which serves to punctuate the dramatic "high"[17]. For this is a television drama and we know that there are more seal snatching scenes to come. But for now the salmon migration is drawing to a close and killer whales are taking time out to play on our screens. David Attenborough does his best to anchor the meaning of what we see in terms of *family*, *social behaviour*, and *cultural tradition*. All of this becomes relative as audiences adjust their relationships to the discourse.

A killer whale swims on to the screen, we are told that it is in a *boisterous mood*, we hear what is called *a great deal of excited calling*. With playful diversion, the film cuts to an image of a jelly-fish,

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[17]David Parer,Anatomy of a Natural HistoryFilm:*Wolves Of The Sea*, lecture. 1993.

suspended in the middle ground. Illuminated by the submarine camera lights we move toward the pink blob. Our imagined sonar effectors and receptors focus in as the jelly-fish is momentarily balanced on the camera lens. It slips off and disappears somewhere along our enormous transmutative bodies. Next we see the profile of a killer whale as it swims into a pink jelly-fish. It makes its way across the screen with the jelly-fish balanced on its nose. The camera and the editing invite us as to be a killer-whale. It is an enchanting evanescence, the difference between the act of perceiving, and what is perceived as the outside world, is blurred. So is meaning, for the visually literate anyway. Unlike pleasure derived from the imaginary we are afforded a partial subjective understanding of what it would be like to be a killer whale. For the voice of patriarchy, Our Father of Natural History Television, intercedes, denying total submersion into the film-maker's projected fantasy.

Within the Natural History Television genre, audiences have come to expect what David Parer describes as, "a lot of fighting, a lot of fornication, and a lot of pretty pictures".[18] The intertextuality, however, of the flesh and blood of our narrator's words and the film-makers images of killer whale behaviour that now appear on our screen, is paradoxical in terms of these conventions. "*Individuals from different families literally, rub shoulders. Now would be the time when a male could mate with a female from another pod,*" is the narration. Filmed from aboard a catamaran we see the fins and flukes of two killer whales as they break the surface of the water and then dive down into the field of view of the submarine camera, where they *rub shoulders*. The image is seen, slightly after the narration is heard, the effect creates the meaning for what is seen.

[18] David Parer 1993.

"*But unexpectedly, many of the sexually active groups that form during these big assemblies, consist entirely of males.- This is one of them swimming , upside down in the mating position*", David's voice rises in pitch so that it sounds like he is asking a question rather than stating a killer whale fact. John Ford's voice takes over, "*One of the more peculiar behaviours of the killer whales is the sexual play that goes on between males of the different pods when the pods are travelling together. This may go on for hours at a time, with males rolling over each other, usually with erections and sometimes it gets very physical with animals jumping out of the water and rolling and tussling with each other. We don't really know what the function of the interactions are but it seems to be where the big mature bulls, through various sexual displays and physical displays, demonstrate that they are dominant over others that may be competing with them for access to breeding females*".

Filmed from the underwater camera we see two killer whales. Using the under side of his tail, one gently touches the other, at the base of his erect penis. Voyeuristically, we move in closer as they swim along, together. This time the one on top gently touches the other on the stomach, and, swimming slightly faster, touches him again between his front flippers. It is the gentleness of the contact that the submarine camera has recorded, that the scientist and David Attenborough fail to acknowledge. As Natural Historians they perceive the killer whales as displaying some sort of unknown *function*. This implies that killer whale function is a condition that is separate from its own existence

In exploring the sexual issues raised in this sequence, it is important to acknowledge that any access to the meaning of the perceived killer whale behaviour is mediated through the televisual metadiscourse. Audiences are situated in relationship to television's homogeneous *family*

paradigm. As a mode of address it is an ideological mirror for *family* viewers. It is a system of representation that consciously and unconsciously constructs a comprehension of animal sexuality in terms of the dominant notion of the heterosexual human. It is therefore, *unexpected* and *peculiar*, that two male killer whales should appear to behave in a way which is homosexual and erotic. Pivotal to an interpretation that is subordinate to the "television family", is that killer whale homosexual behaviour can only be explained in terms of *access to the breeding females* , who are absent from our screens.

In her essay *The Sex-life Of Stick Insects*, Rosalind Coward points out the anthropomorphic *assumptions* that are commonly made about the sexual behaviour and characteristics of plants and animals on Natural History T.V. shows.

> *We encounter with monotonous regularity, the 'dominant' male defending his 'territory'; the hierarchies between males in their access to females; the existence of harems. We hear of females (and young males) assuming submissive postures. And we hear endless examples of home-making and parental provision*[19].

What requires careful examination, suggests Coward, is the way that Natural History Television transfers human concepts such as *father*, *mother*, *property* and *home* in the description of plants and animals. What is of greater concern than representing a continuum between animals and humanity is a beguiling sense of patriarchal assumptions which accompany the privileged sight of *nature* copulating on prime-time viewing.

What enormous pleasure we get when we watch these nature shows. How fascinating and awesome nature appears. The combined efficacy of

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[19]Rosalind Coward,. Female Desire Woman's Sexuality Today; *The Sex life of Stick Insects*. Paladin Books, London, 1984. p.212.

our narrator's reassuring words, the background sound effects and the dynamic, black and white, streamlined forms that appear to glide effortlessly across the surface of our televisions, is fantastic. Below the threshold of consciousness the natural becomes the supernatural. These two worlds exist, inseparable as reading strategies. We marvel at the effect. On an audio track, sound produced by a "fairy dust machine" fibulates mystically, as filtered sunlight. Through the electronically encoded water, it sparkles on the killer whales and the pebbles. As pixilated reality, light is footage. The prerequisite is, that this footage will be categorised and structured as a coherent and realistic story where killer whale events are linked rationally.

And so the story goes...."*After a hectic part of socialising like this some of the whales will often head for a particular rocky beach on Vancouver Island...*" the narration facilitates the edit as we enter into shallow water with good visibility. Killer whales are scraping their sides on the pebbles which "*apparently gives them a most delectable sensation*". The televisual experience is extraordinary. We had just gotten over the erection sequence, when the metonymic association of juicy word to the "*strange squeaks and squawks*" of killer whale self-stimulation impels us to respond correspondingly. What a wonderful indulgence and such a strategic place for David Attenborough to introduce us to his concept of killer whale "*cultural tradition*".

According to his narration the practice of rubbing themselves on the rocky beach of Vancouver Island , "*like their hunting techniques, must be counted as one of the cultural traditions, of the Johnston Strait killers*". This cosmological position is supported by the fact that killer whale behaviour has been observed by local fishermen and whale researchers in the past. Based upon the assumption that killer whales maintain a physical

concept of time. That killer whales perform neat tricks which appeal to the human sense of piety does not constitute that the perceived behaviour is an re-interpretation of the influence of Greek rationalism on Judeo-Christianity. It is to situate humanity centrally in the frame while the cameras remain invisible. Killer whales are bonded with the chains of a particular social identity and held within an Arcadian, empirical understanding of this cosmos.

We are accustomed to Sir David Attenborough as the B.B.C.T.V. personality who introduces us to the world of Natural History. Week after week, he is that distinctive voice in our heads, as we tune into *nature*. Within the thirty minute, programmed time-slot, sandwiched between current affairs and the drama, his texts coalesce with pictures of everything from arctic terns to zebras. Along with the roast parsnips and Yorkshire pudding we perceive killer whales in a constant state of becoming. With reference to its own *cultural tradition*, his text is elucidated hermeneutically. Although we feel as if we have just experienced a historical killer whale moment, the reality of killer whale existence occurs beyond the framework of language and anglo collective experience. We encounter a conceptual ethical dilemma. The more killer whale knowledge that is compiled the more intentional the killer whale story becomes.

David Attenborough acknowledges these limited horizons and the problems associated with representing nature on film and film designed for television audiences. In an interview with Miles Kingston on a programme called *The Making Of* <u>*The Living Planet*</u>, Miles asks David; *Is there a danger that audiences may get a false impression of what nature is really like ? Yes,* replies David, *and that in a sense is the artifice of making films because all art, all writing, all film-making is artificial*

because you are giving the viewer through the artifice that the camera is not there.

In his essay *The Artifice Of The Natural ; How TV's nature shows make all the earth a stage,* Charles Siebert suggests that the camera remains invisible to highten dramatic tension.

> *The makers hands are kept out of the frame so as not to break the tension we feel between the indifference's and apparent arbitrariness of occurrences in the natural world and our own civilised stays against it.*[20]

As a system of representation Natural History television denies, what Siebert calls, the *sense of gradualness* of nature. The narrative collapsing and expanding of events beyond the dimension of their manifestation in the everyday. Television Nature Shows are, above all else, says Siebert, extravagant animal operas, dramatising, scoring, voicing in human terms the vast backdrop of inhuman action.

Through the agency of television, the appearance of *nature* is subject to the same conventions that viewers apply to all T.V. shows. Values are projected, and *nature* is represented as a imagined site. The Natural History T.V. programme sets out to demystify the behaviour of wildlife and to unlock the secrets of nature. Audiences are encouraged to identify with the lives and individual characteristics of the plants and animals portrayed. This process tends to be hieratical, certain associations are made between qualities that are accepted as being humanly desirable and conversely those attributes deemed adverse. Camera angles, editing decisions, and the background sound track help to construct an altruistic

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[20] Charles Siebert, 1993, p.45.

response when viewing some species and illiberal reactions to others. In *Wolves of the Sea* the feelings of majesty and wonder are fostered in the audience's comprehension of the lives of killer whales. The same sympathies are not reserved for what David Attenborough describes with some derision as the *ever present gulls,* or *skuas, the vultures of the sea.*

Television transforms what is perceived to be real nature into a representation. As viewers, in the intimacy of our homes, across the charged space between the endless series of horizontal scanning lines and alternating phase fields of our screen, the illusory image of ocean and shoreline stand in for actual ocean and real shoreline. Propelled by the lights, cameras and action, we take our hallucinatory places under the waves and engage with the film-maker's text to swim along with the pod. As spectators it engulfs us in a sense of our own cretaeous-selves. David Attenborough's text, however, lugs us back to the surface, and we hear his narration as something factual, as an outside educational experience. He situates his reading subjects in a pedagoglogical relationship to his text. It is the universality of killer whale social behaviour and the behaviour that can be comprehended as *tradition,* that is the lesson for tonight. Fluctuating between the combination of these killer whale representations, as an audience we make our way around the world from one hunting scene to the next.

Structurally, the repetition is consistent with many stories that begin with "Once upon a time". Killer whale action that is played-out in the fiords of Norway, Baie Americane on the Crozet Islands and Pategonia in Argentina, was announced in the first one and a half minutes of the film. Repeatedly, over 12500 feet of film, killer whales *move in for the kill.* With the farcical and tragic face of a melodrama, *nature* appears on prime-time viewing. All of Australia gasped in self-reflective joy and

wonder as a seal pup is seen born. With its mother's water, it burst onto our screens and blurted out its bonding *bark*. The psychological magnitude with which this text unconsciously functions, serves to intensify the dramatic tension between the seals and the killer whales. It is what Charles Siebert calls *the old war and horror movie technique of getting you attached to the minor characters- in this instance via countless mother / pup nuzzling and nursing scenes so that you feel more deeply the pain of their loss.*[21]

In portraying killer whales as predators, *Wolves of the Sea* similarly employs cinematic tradition to increase the stories' universal appeal. Combined with the paradigms of Natural History, as text for the interrelationships between predator and prey, the effect makes for entertaining and educational television *viewing*. As audiences we value the role that shows such as *Wolves of the Sea* fulfil in drawing attention to the impact that humans have upon the lives of animals. From Nature programmes audiences learn about the plight facing *nature* in its endeavour to survive. We are grateful for being made aware and to learn how we can help. The questions that this research asks; is what impact do Natural History T.V. programmes have upon the lives of the plants and animals that they portray? Does *Wolves of the Sea* simply represent the lives of killer whales within the limitations of the televisual medium? Is the programme an attempt to parallel the lives of the killer whale with that of our own and thus readdress "human's historic delusion of superiority and separateness from nature?"[22] Leaving '*A*'pod and the elephant seals of Crozet Island behind, the next chapter explores the implications of the title *Wolves of the Sea* in the light of these questions.

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21 Charles Siebert, 1993, p.44.

22 Jay D Hair, President of the National Wildlife Federation Washington D.C., *When Nature is Televised*, a letter to the editor of Harpers Magazine , in response to Charles Siebert's essay, May, 1993.

Why wolves ?

Wolves of the Sea is a metaphor that is believed to have first been used by Seventeenth Century whalers. It refers to analogous behavioural characteristics of two groups of predatory mammals. As an abstract representation, it is a marriage of the majestic creatures of the *wild*.

In Sheep's Clothing.

Communication and planning enable both killer whales and wolves to survive as predators. Human interpretation of these characteristics has resulted in a metaphor that is bound to particular and conflicting culturally constructed meanings. In the title *Wolves of the Sea*, the wolf, or collectively, 'Wolves', is a symbol. It establishes a relationship. Not between wolves and killer whales but between wolves and human beings. The title indirectly implicates killer whales in a semantic association common to both wolves and humans. In an endeavour to understand this metaphoric triadic relation it is necessary, firstly, to examine the concept of animal symbolism, and secondly, to examine what the wolf stands for, in human terms, and the implications for killer whales.

In his introduction to *Signifying Animals*, Roy Willis outlines the dualistic form of human perception of animals. A human understanding of another life form is based upon being analogous to that particular life form and simultaneously separated from it.

> *To name a symbolic animal, is to name a relation. This relation is always problematic, in the sense that unlike social relations, which always imply each other (as, for example, wife-husband, or patron-client) the animal symbol conveys two opposed sets of meanings, signifying both separation and continuity, being both paradigm and syntagm. (In English the very term 'animal' has this double sense, being opposed to 'human' in common usage but*

embracing the human species in scientific parlance.)[23]

The self-and-other mode of perception is what distinguishes us from conscious non human animals. That the human cognitive agency of language can project intention and construct worlds in advance of their practical implementation is a position taken up by Tim Ingold in an essay called *The Animal In The Study Of Humanity.* Signifying the difference between Homo Sapiens - sapiens and other animate species is this ability to enculturate. If non human animals are defined by human edification then the process remains culturally relative. Language is a symbolic code that endorses anthropocentric understandings of the natural world. In one sense this symbolic code sets us apart from the other living systems and sub-systems that we share the planet with, in another it ingratiates them to us. This us-and-them, self-and-other dialectic is essentially metaphoric.

Biologically animals have much in common with humans. We share fundamental dualisms that serve to reduce the differences between all species. Holistically, all organisms are united in relation to the forces of the environment. The earth is a unified, living field, that is distinguish by different environments. Animals and all living things respond to their unique worlds within this larger organic system.

Ethology is the study and behaviour of animals in their individual environments. Jakob von Uexkull,(1864-1944), developed a theory of ethology that is known as *Umwelt.*

> *According to von Uexkull, every natural organism 'constructs' its own 'world' from the flux of events constituting its natural environment. This characteristic, species-specific Umwelt, is built out of the working together of each creature's receptor and effector organs, its perception of the 'outer' world, as filtered through its sensory equipment, and its reaction to those perceptions. Thus the members of each natural species inhabit different, organically*

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23 Roy Willis, Signifying Animals; Human Meaning in the Natural World, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1990, p.19.

constructed 'worlds' that vary in content and complexity according to the range and relative sophistication of the creature's 'world-making' equipment.[24]

His theory is significant in an understanding of how audiences perceive animal behaviour and environments on television, and how humans perceive animals in general. When a televised image of nature is received in the domestic human environment, it is an external, representation of the actual *Umwelt*. An understanding of the projected natural world becomes an objective extension of the human world. Structured in filmic time a moment in an animal's life is perceived as one twenty fifth of a second in a human animal's life. However, when an underwater camera enters a killer whale's world, the camera is perceived by the killer whale, by its sonar receptors and effectors, the operational space-time framework of its *Umwelt*. This is the disparity between the representation of what a killer whale would experience and the actual experience.

Of course, the constructed technological *Umwelt* of the human species is geographically and socially varied. Correspondingly, representations of non-human animals maintain indigenous meaning that is pertinent to various cultural contexts. For the purposes of this discussion, televised representations of nature are interpretations that form a part of a total semiosis that is a western, industrialised, post-modern society. This society can be further defined by the individual and collective *Umwelts* that it incorporates. How an individual human animal perceives and reacts to a televised non human animal is via a series of symbolic relationships which sustain a self and other dyad. It is a paradoxical process that representation represents.

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24 Roy Willis, 1990, p.11.

Its the (*boy who cried*) WOLF !

> *Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or the reflection of the representer. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its own image.*[25]

Killer whales have never preyed upon the human species. No reports of any deliberate attacks by killer whales exist. There are, however, many instances of humans being killed and eaten by wolves. Historical records readily demonstrate why the wolf should have been regarded as a real threat to humans.[26]

Humans and wolves are adapted to surviving as predators, as killers. It was mainly in the Northern Hemisphere, that both, once, shared the same ecological conditions. Although there is no single human attitude towards the wolf, for the dominant Western culture the wolf is the archetypal rival, the universal monster, and an expression of the darker side of the human psyche. In many ways the wolf is imprisoned in the human consciousness. Having previously been grossly misrepresented wolves have suffered unjustified extermination of entire populations in many parts of the world.

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25 Jacque Derrida, Of Grammatology, John Hopkins Press, London, 1976, p.36.

26 Joyce Thomas, Inside The Wolf's Belly; Aspects of the Fairy Tale, Sheffield Academic Press, Shefield, England, 1989.

Illustration 6.

A televised image of a wolf. Camera angle, and extreme close up are used to increase the tension and fear engendered in the wolf.

The wolf looms powerfully in traditional mental imageries that symbolise 'wild nature'. Dominance of the wolf, even to the point of extinction, is representative of the contest between refined civilisation and raw, untamed, nature, and the contest between self and other. In fairy stories that have evolved from European folk tales children learn to identify the wolf with fear, anxiety, and sexual aggression. He is the Big Bad Wolf. As an antagonist in the fairy story, children are taught that he is the enemy. Within the fairy tale the wolf is invested with the human attributes of thought, speech and feeling. He is portrayed as being a physically strong, cunning predator who will stop at nothing to satisfy his unquenchable appetite. So disreputable is the wolf's character as an animal adversary it embodies all that is bad to the point of evil.

> *Given the wolf's realistic threat and presence, it is easy to comprehend why he should have assumed his adversary role in folktales, a fantastic yet in keeping with human experience and perception of the animal. Just as humans energetically sought the wolf's extermination in Europe, so are they exterminated within the tales.*[27]

"A hard winter brings out the wolf."

Inside the Wolf's Belly, by Joyce Thomas examines how the popular fairy tale portrays the wolf. Thomas recognises similarities in the dramatic conflict enacted in the narratives; 'The Three Little Pigs', 'The Three Billy-Goats Gruff', and 'The Wolf and the Seven Kids'. These stories reflect the reality that domesticated livestock is a potential prey to

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[27]Joyce Thomas, 1989, p.116.

wolves. When competing with human hunters for a limited number of wild game, wolves, in order to survive, are forced to take the animals of farms and townships. In the stories, its a case of, the multiple protagonist verses the lone antagonist, or *the domesticated animal's common herds*, and, by extension *civilisation's collective community*,[28] is thus threatened by the alien other.

The havoc that the wolf wreaks in the houses of the three little pigs and the seven kids, as Thomas points out, is representative of the force of wild nature, *much like a tornado*.[29] After subjugating the pseudo-animal/human characters to terror, in his search for food, the wolf in these stories is eventually destroyed and human control over the natural world is symbolically reinstated. Contrary to the optimism expressed in the narrative device that beholds good triumph over evil, that, 'they all lived happily ever after', is exclusively textual. In reality ordinance is only ever temporally restored as natural 'disasters' continue to hazard an anthropocentric understanding of survival.

"A wolf may come in many disguises."

'Little Red Cap' by the Grimm Brothers and 'Little Red Riding Hood' by Perrault, are two very similar fairy stories, which incorporate psychological sexual symbolism in their personification of the wolf. In a Freudian interpretation of the story the little girl's red riding-hood is indicative of her nearing sexual maturity, the wolf that she meets in the woods, on her way to Granny's house can be understood by his motivations to seduce and consequently consume the girl. The

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28 Joyce Thomas, 1989, p.120.
29 Joyce Thomas, 1989, p.117.

grandmother's role in the narrative is multifarious in this understanding of the story, she does however, propound a clear example of a literary metamorphoses of the werewolf phenomenon.[30] It is ironical that in terms of consumption, the werewolf along with the vampire, satisfy an Gargantuan lust for horror in film and video consumers. Fundamentally it is humans who conceptually eat the wolf.

The moon is full. Werewolves are thirsty for blood. So to are the audiences of films such as *The Howling*, and *Silver Bullet*, and *The American Werewolf in London*. They will not be disappointed, the werewolf ritual is ceremoniously observed, the mythological details that assume the form of monstrous generic entities are all accounted for. The familiar twilight howl, grotesque muscular contortions to the slippery sounds of twisting rubber, wolf physiognomy unfolds, the all important sense organs, the ears, the nose, the nightmarish eyes, and the long glinting carnivorous teeth; all the very much better to eat you with. Finally, with the ancient resonance of Indo-European tribal custom, the wolf pelt is donned. The hybrid human/wolf, the shape shifter, is complete. The beast emerges from within and nocturnal terror rules.[31]

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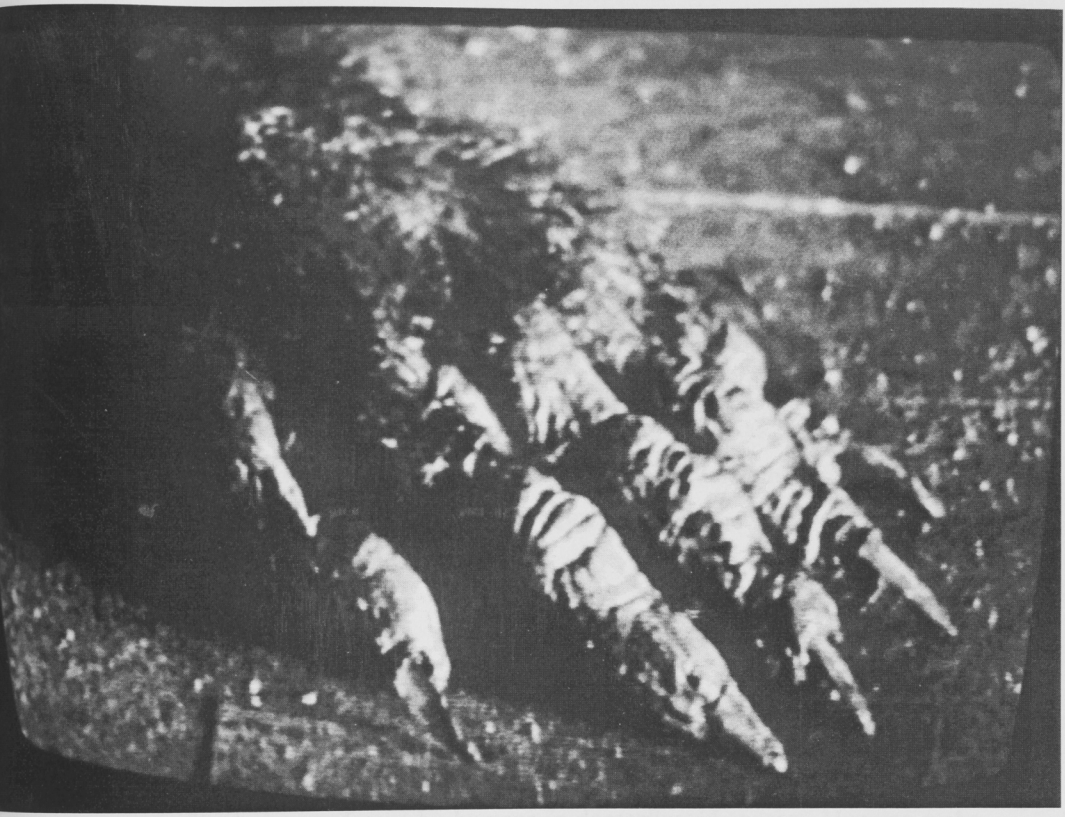
[30]Robert Eisler, Man Into Wolf; an anthropological interpretation of sadism, masochism, and lycanthropy. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. London. 1951.
Lycanthropy', is the transformation from a person into a wolf, the process of becoming a werewolf. Lycanthropy refers to the psychotic condition where a person believes that he or she is a wolf with lupine teeth. Manifesting a raving madness, they refuse to eat anything but raw, bloody meat and sexually attack any victims that they can overpower. Scientifically linked with the contagious canine rabies virus, lycanthropy is communicable to humans by the bite of an dog which had originally been transmitted by the saliva of an infected wolf. It is characterised by excessive salavation, adversion to water, convulsions and paralysis.

[31]Robert Eisler, 1951. pp. 54-59. Terrorists have historically associated themselves with werewolves. 'Organization Werwolf', was the name of a Nazi para-military group who were responsible for political assinations that were carried out at night. Many other cultures exploited the wolf as a symbol of dread and fear in times of warfare. Centuries earlier the Vikings made use of the wolf as a symbol to terrorize and conquer foreign territories. In Nordic mythology the monstrous wolf *Fenis*.symbolized a force that destroyed the sun. Up until the fifteenth century a wolf was also represented as a companion to Mars, the God of War. In this sense the wolf was a messenger of the rapacity of war, of lust and death as common bed fellows.
The she-wolf in Roman times was a pejorative symbol as a harlot. A prostitute was known as a *lupa* or a she-wolf, and brothels were *lupercals*. So common was the association that the she-wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus, is presupposed to have been a *lupula*. Stories about childern being raised by she-wolves are numerous and well documented through out history

Illustration 7.



Imagery common to horror videos is the transformation from human to hybrid wolf character, from the natural to the super-natural, and back again.

"... and the wolf shall lie with the lamb."

Although animal behaviourist and archaeological theory vary, it is commonly believed that the Asiatic wolf is the ancestor of the dog. Canis familiaris, mans' best friend, is perhaps the best example of an animal existing in an expansive symbiotic relationship with the human species. In behavioural terms the interrelationship illustrates how the social organisation of the wolf pack has its equivalent in the human domestic situation. Domestication of the dog has been possible though the process of transferring the canine instinct, to be subordinate to the dominant pack leader, to the human equivalent. As 'top dog', humans have exploited the loyalty that dogs naturally display to their leaders. In this way humans have constructed the dogs to be psychological and social extensions of themselves.

Neoteny, which is the perseverance of infantile behavioural characteristics through to maturity in an animal, it is what differentiates a wolf from a dog.[32] Certain physical features, such as an enlarged frontal cranium and proportionally large eyes that are characteristic of baby animals, are preferred by humans in domesticated species. Humans make the distinction between reduced aggression and neotenous behaviour in animals. This is often expressed as an emotional attachment to the animal as in the phenomenon of pets.[33]

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[32]Stephen Budiansky, The Covenant Of The Wild; Why Animals Chose Domestication, William Morrow and Co. Inc., New York. 1992. p. 17.
All domestic animals, in both behaviour and appearance, retain juvenile traits in adulthood. One of the very first hints in the the archaeological record of an animal's domestication is the jaw bone of a wolf from southwest Asia, dated twelve thousand years ago, in which the face and muzzle have begun to shorten- an adult with the face of a puppy-crowding the teeth together.

[33]John Berger , About Looking;*Why Look At Animals*, Pantheon Books, New York. 1980. p. 13

Berger recognises the extent that pets have been marginalised from their original instincts as wild animals. He cites the physical conditions of urban living spaces that pets share with their masters and mistresses."that lack space, earth, non-human animal companionship, seasonal variation and natural temperatures as examples of how pets become creatures of human lifestyle. The interrelationship between the pet and its owner is one of dependency."[34]

The pet relies on the human association for its every physical need. In return the pet provides security, familiarity and company to the human and can be conditioned to react to confirm the individuality of, and consequently become an extension of, the human.

It is not uncommon for pets, dogs especially, to accompany their human proprietors every where they go. The *Talk To The Animal* television show, which is sponsored by related pet industries, recently told of a dog (wearing a protective crash helmet), who abseils over cliffs with its master. There is the story of a dog who goes scuba diving in Florida, and others that go sky diving. Indeed, the first animal in space was a Russian laboratory dog. Although dog owners, as pack leader's, insist that their canine counterparts eagerly enter into these relationships, dog-like dependence, trainability and obedience can be understood as a form of social repression, conformity and authoritarianism.

The view taken by Stephen Budiansky in *The Covenant Of The Wild; Why animals chose domestication* , is that some plants and animals adopted domestication and civilisation as a survival strategy. He uses archaeological evidence to support a position that animal/human contracts can be understood in terms of evolutionary success. The 19th century, Darwinian claim that Natural History is defined as the "survival of the fittest" can also be understood as the survival of the survivors.

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[34] John Berger, 1980. p. 14.

Budiansky's evolutionary process of domesticated survival is a logical extension of this position.[35]

"Wolves Of The Sea." The implications for killer whales.

While the dog is a domesticated extraction of the idiosyncratic wild wolf, the killer-whale has only ever been tamed. By extension, the metaphor *Wolves Of The Sea* does implicate the killer whale in the historical process of domestication.

At times killer whales have entered into symbiotic relationships with humans. One such case is recorded in the historical novel *The Killers of Eden* by Tom Mead.[36] Eden is a coastal town in New South Wales where killer whales would once attract the attention of the local whalers when humpback and blue whales came into Eden's Two-Fold Bay. Over a period of one hundred years, until the whaling industry had drastically reduced the humpback population, the killer whales would round up the whales, and help the fishermen to kill them. For their role in the deed the killer whales would get to eat the enormous tongues and lips of the whales.

Killer whales also "star" in the spectacle of oceanariums like *SeaWorld* in Queensland and in San Deigo. By rewarding the killer whales with food their behaviour is conditioned so that they will respond to certain commandments.[37] Theme-park andiences have similarly been

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35 Stephen Budiansky, 1992. p. 24. If we are to believe that domestication was the result of human exploits alone, then we run into a paradox: The only way to produce an animal with desirable traits is through captive breeding, yet the only way they could have been captively breed is if they had the desirable traits to start with. This paradox is the crux of the entire, counterintuitive line of evidence that argues for domestication as an evolutionary, rather than a human invention. The only way out is to recognize that in an evolutionary sense, domesticated animals chose us as much as we chose them. And that leads to the broader view of nature that sees humans not as the arrogant despoilers and enslavers of the natural world, but as a part of that natural world, and the custodians of a remarkable evolutionary compact among species.

36 Tom Mead, Killers of Eden; The killer whales of Twofold Bay. Angus & Robertson. N.S.W. 1961.

37 The same techniques are used by The United States military to train dolphins. Although many of the

conditioned to expect the killer whales and other captive marine mammals to perform and entertain.[38]

In the seventeenth century up until the present it has been observed that killer whales, wolves and humans live social lives in family groups. All being predatory mammals with elaborate systems of communication that aid survival. However there is a danger in making direct comparison based purely upon observed behaviour. One big difference is that killer whales are marine mammals, creatures from the deep. The element of water, its characteristics of transparency and depth have always signified the unknown and the fantastic. That killer whales should continue to be likened to land animals, that resemblances of wolves which exist in human memory be inscribed onto the bodies of killer whales is the legacy of Natural History. For the process that permits the colloquial metaphor to continue is the same imperial process that represents nature in a system of names.[39]

An understanding of the metaphor today, has a different set of meanings than those insinuated by seventeenth century whalers. In the late twentieth century the wolf motif signifies that which is free and wild. There is great concern for the survival of *wild* animals at this time. The propagation programmes of modern zoos are testimony to the endeavour to keep animals from extinction. Wildlife television shows raise awareness of the difficulties that many species experience in their quest

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details of this training operation remain a secret it is known that dolphins have been used to retrieve lost equipment and to guard naval bases.

[38]The 1992 movie *FreeWilly*, recounts the convergence of the parallel lives of a killer whale called Willy who is a captive in a theme-park and a street kid without parents. It is an example of a metaphoric relationship similar to that implied in the title *Wolves of the Sea*. Audiences are invited to understand the two as victims within the same social organization. In a dramatic and emotional resolution to the movie it was only through unconditional benevolence that wildness and freedom be restored to the killer whale, and civilization and conformity restored to the boy. It is extremely ironic that the killer whale who "starred" in the film remains a prisoner in a theme-park aquarium.

[39] Michel Foucalt, The Order Of Things, Tavistock Publications, London. 1972, p.158.
Natural History is contemporaneous with language : it is on the same level as the spontaneous play that analyses representations in the memory, determines their common elements, establishes signs upon the basis of those elements, and finally imposes names.

for survival. Generally people feel a terrible sense of urgency to help if creatures from the "wild" are threatened or endangered in some way. The desire to "save" wild animals is the ironical desire to keep intact the value of nature as a concept. In this way the idealized life of a "wild" animal is subjected to a process of conceptual domestication. For the wolf roaming unencumbered in the human imagination is an illusion that must be owned, managed and cherished like a household pet.[40]

And they all lived happily ever after...

As the Andean flutes are mournfully amplified out of our television speakers the sun goes down over the Pacific Ocean. The orange rays of its dying light is reflected off the water and the sand. Over the previous 55 minutes the collective 'we' of television have been witnesses to the most marvellous and unrestricted vision of killer whales and the most horrifying and dramatic images of their hunting techniques. The last location, Madina Bay, in Patagonia, South America, we watched in horror and fascination as time after time again the killer whales surged up to snatch seal pups from the beach. The scenes that were promised in the beginning have all taken their respective places in the narrative. Expectation is fulfilled.

And then when young and old have shared the catch and eaten their fill there comes a most unexpected incident. Their last catch is not killed but carried gently back to shore and set free. Is this an act of mercy or is it a part of play behaviour? Who can say? How can one enter the mind

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40 Ian Warden, *I Saw,: TV wildlife docos can bank on the whales.* The Canberra Times , *T.V. Guide*,,26th April 1993. In his television review column Ian Warden writes that "*Wolves of the Sea* encourages in the viewer that it would be nice to have some killer whales of one's own if only one could afford a backyard pool large enough to enable them to frolic.Of course, he continues, to be realistic, they would not be happy in a backyard and in any case small children taking short cuts through one's backyard (like the little girl who took such a short cut through a backyard in Kingston some days ago only to have a terrifying interface with two mastiffs) would be vulnerable, given the artful whales ability to surf up out of the water in pursuit of prey. Not even postmen and Jehovah's Witnesses would be safe!"

of a killer whale? Filmed from the beach we see a seal pup being pushed ashore by a killer whale. Through the reassuring words of David Attenborough we are lead to believe this aspect of killer whale behaviour is *unexpected.* As television audiences we always infer events causally. Therefore, this *incident* appears to us as unexpected within the framework of a programme which controls audience anticipation. Now is the time when, true to the stories' ending, the audience is returned safely to the beginning. The time when tensions are dispersed and action is consolidated. Our narrator addresses us directly. In doing so redirects our attention away from the past events into the present reality. He directs us away from the fantastic and imaginative journey that the camera and music and wondrous sound recordings have taken us on and returns us to our every day lives.

How can one enter the mind of a killer whale? he paradoxically addresses us, after the television has created for us a sense of our own cretaeous-selves, after the film-makers had invited us to swim along with the pod, after we had started with "Once-upon-a-time" and are finishing with "And they all lived happily ever after". The intimate space we share with our television and its conventions of distorting subjectivity positions us extremely close to killer whales. Like us they are represented with names and numbers and the scientists can identify them individually.

David Attenborough tells us that they *take time out to play* and this behaviour should be understood as a *cultural tradition.* We are shown how to read killer whale *play* behaviour as a sign that indicates not a frivolous expenditure of energy at any cost but as an act of killer whale socialisation, that is defined by Natural History, as a function to facilitate survival. It is important to remember however, that our perception and explanation of this behaviour is not necessarily the same as the true nature of killer whale existence.

That these whales are highly intelligent is clear from the fact that each community around the world has developed its own vocabulary of sounds, and its own skills and traditions. As we watch them we might think that we can detect signs of anger, pleasure and curiosity in their behaviour. But signs of morality, of good and evil, we should not attribute to them. Those are the product of the human mind. We shouldn't regard the killers as either cruel or merciful, they are what they are, magnificient animals that must kill to live.

The sense of resignation is present in David Attenborough's voice and we can tell that *Wolves of the Sea* is almost finished, some of the more tranquil scenes showing killer whale fins sliding gracefully through the water are replayed. The background music gradually builds in prominence. Contentedly, we accept David Attenborough's closing words as the moral to the story. He encourages us not to understand killer whales in the human terms of *good and evil*. His narration, which represents a scientific and factual understanding of killer whale behaviour is opposed to, yet aligned with, the fantastical and imaginary killer whale state constructed for us by the film-makers. The last killer whale sonar recording punctuates a reconciliation of these opposing discourses. As we adjust our relative viewing positions and prepare to tune into another television programme or switch the set off, they merge. We leave *Wolves of the Sea* with killer whales alive and happy in our minds. They have been made concrete for us as representations within the historical framework of a story.

Conclusion

This investigation has been motivated by a desire to achieve an unadulterated acceptance of the otherness of plants and animals, to appreciate them without imposing human standards onto them.

The television set has replaced the display case of the Natural History museum as the site where nature is laid out to be seen and heard. The astounding diversity of nature, the ingenious adaptations which function to safeguard survival are made even more astounding and spectacular by television's subjectifying conventions. Natural History television is established as a genre in the context of other all T.V. shows. The plants and animals it portrays are associated with, and constructed directly as, characters in stories. They share the evening viewing with heroes and villians and all other T.V.personalities. A sense of time and space which is constructed for Natural History television subjects is an accepted narrative formula.

This research has identified the Natural History television documentary as a site through which *nature* is encountered and meaning is produced. I have focused upon *Wolves of the Sea* as a popular example of this process. *Wolves of the Sea* presents killer whales in a particular way. While they are understood by the audiences of the programme as fascinating and dangerous creatures, they can also be understood as television representations. Representations of themselves and of what our mythology makes them.

This sub-thesis is an analysis the mechanisms of *Wolves of the Sea* which frame killer whale behaviour within the limitations of television and Natural History discourse. In particular it acknowledges the differing and often conflicting discourses of the film-makers and the narrator. Killer whales are structured as characters in a narrative and

simultaneously portrayed as specimens of scientific interest. They can be identified by both name and number.

The single most obvious identity which the film constructs for killer whales however, is the title *Wolves of the Sea*. While the origins of the name is unacknowledged by the film and the book about the making of the film, I hope to have conveyed to the reader an understanding of the significance of the title and its implications for killer whales. It is important, not to distinguish killer whales by the common elements that were established by seventeenth century European whalers, but by their difference. The name *Wolves of the Sea* indirectly situates killer whales in a relationship with humans. More accurately, however, it is a metaphor which describes an association between wolves and humans. Wolves are closley linked with humans and exist in our imaginations as a sign which, not only, indicates fear but also noble freedom and wilderness. So close is the human connection to the wolf that there exists the phenomonon of lycanthropy, the transformation of a person into a wolf. In terms of subjectivity, this is not unlike the invitation extended to the audience of *Wolves of the Sea* to take a ride along with the pod and within the dream-like world of television, experience what it would be like to be a killer whale.

With the per**pet**uation of the name, *Wolves of the Sea*, killer whales are directly implicated in the process of domestication which has neotenised wild wolves into *canis familiaris*. Indeed, it can be argued that all language conceptualises *nature* in a way that it is covenanted, ordered, and controlled. That an understanding of anything *wild* is mediated through the human aspiration to do just that, to understand it, to unlock its secrets and to suit it to our own purpose. Genetically selecting and engineering plant and animal characteristics is contemporary example of this domestication process. As a consequence, this strategy has brought

about an estrangement from nature and a paradoxical desire to recover a sense of wilderness in nature; a sense of longing for nature which is one of the reasons Natural History television shows are enormously popular. Perhaps people believe that by watching the shows and by purchasing Nature videos that somehow they are restoring some of the naturalness back into nature, somehow they are helping to save nature. Few people realise that the nature they are experiencing on their screens is a sophisticated audio visual production; a celebration of representational technology.

An analysis of the Natural History television genre is important. It is critical that the distorting lenses by which nature is represented remain in the frame and the debate be kept active. As more nature shows are produced and appear on our televisions the more accepting we become to a nature which is modelled to comply to the limitations of the medium. In adopting TV nature as the real nature there is a danger that audiences may find an actual experience with nature dull and less exhilarating than the brightly lit world of TV nature. Equally, audiences may become bored with TV nature as it competes on prime time viewing with other star attractions. It is probable they may eventually choose entertainment over educational viewing, replacing the lives of animals with the lives of storybook and cartoon animals.

In the current theoretical consciousness of the late twentieth century, it is a matter urgency to experience a relationship with members of the natural world with an understanding of how languages impose meaning. This relationship would not be shaded by the fulfilment of desire that is put into place at some predetermined beginning like a social hypothesis or a "Once Upon A Time" story. Nor would it be a repetitious replay or a continuous anticipation for the unexpected. Ideally it is an encounter located in its own uniqueness, in the mutual concession of Umwelts.

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